

Oakland man slain, house set ablaze

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By Jim Greaver
The Tribune

An 84-year-old man was stabbed to death in his neatly kept home in Oakland's Elmhurst district early Sunday, and his killer apparently attempted to cover up the slaying by setting the house on fire.

Homicide Sgt. John Vargas said police were called to the home of Henry R. Rogers, a retired butcher, when firefighters found his body on the living room floor of his house in the 1000 block of 87th Avenue.

Vargas said the home had been ransacked and the garage door kicked in. Rogers was stabbed in what appears to have been a robbery-motivated slaying, Vargas said.

Neighbors summoned firefighters to the burning, smoke-filled house at 2:23 a.m. Fire investigators determined that two separate fires had been set in the living room, using a flammable liquid. Containers found by police technicians were being analyzed to determine the type of fuel used to start the fire.

The Rev. Gillette James, pastor of the Beth Eden Baptist Church, described Rogers as a man "we could count on every Sunday."

"He also kept himself active visiting the bedridden at Fairmont Hospital," James said, "just offering a kind word to the patients."

Acting Battalion Chief Reggie Garcia estimated the damage to the one-story, wood-frame structure at \$15,000. No other injuries were reported.

Oakland murder victim eulogized

By Harry Harris
The Tribune

Doing things for others came naturally to Henry Roosevelt Rogers.

Like reading to convalescing hospital patients.

Like checking daily on a pregnant neighbor to see if she was all right or needed anything.

Like offering advice to a longtime friend who was having a problem with a difficult teenage son.

Today those acts are just memories. Rogers is dead, the victim of a vicious robbery-murder Sunday in which he was stabbed repeatedly and the East Oakland home he built himself more than 40 years ago set ablaze.

Sgt. John Vargas issued a plea for anyone with information about the tragedy to call police.

Vargas said that although there were rumors that Rogers kept sizable amounts of money in his home, police found only a few hundred dollars in a hiding place. Some guns and possibly some jewelry are believed to be missing.

The shock over Rogers' death was setting in Monday, but friends and neighbors still found words to describe the impact the 83-year old retired butcher had on their lives and the imprint he left on the neighborhood.

Debra White, a neighbor of Rogers, works as a nurse's aide at High Street Convalescent Hospital. Rogers occasionally visited both High Street and Fairmont hospitals to read or do errands for patients.

White called Rogers a "good-hearted person who cared about people." For example, she said,

when she was pregnant with her youngest daughter Rogers came by every day to see if she needed anything.

"I can't see anyone wanting to hurt Mr. Rogers. Even though he was old he still had a lot of life and energy," she said.

Another neighbor, Dianne Simpson, said the neighborhood "lost a very important man to us."

She said Rogers was outside daily, working on his 1930s Fords, but always had time to chat with people who stopped by. She said Rogers and his dog, Jackie, who was pining at the back door of the home Monday, were familiar sights that would be missed.

"Who in the right state of mind would hurt that man?" she asked. "He was the sweetest man you'd ever want to know."